upgrading of testing facilities at the Textiles Committee and other Public Textile Laboratories to facilitate quick, affordable and reliable test result to the exporters; and promoting quality consciousness among to promote acceptability of Indian goods abroad.

(c) The State of Gujarat has a prominent position in the country. As far as the Textile Industry in concerned, it can be ranked as No. 3 in terms of the overall turnover in the Textile Industry.

(d) The quantum of production of spun yarn and cloth in the state of Gujarat during 1995-96 is given below :

Item	Production in Gujarat
Spun Yarn (Mn. Kg.)	183.7
Mill Cloth (Mn.sq. mtr.)	451.6

Information on the total cloth produced in Gujarat State is not available.

(e) Steps for promotion of exports is not taken separately for each State. However, in order to boost textile export, the Govt. have been taking a number of steps which include encouraging exporters to participate in Buyer-Seller meets, participation in fairs and exhibitions in major markets; enabling import of capital goods at concessional duty for export production; special arrangements for duty free import of raw materials for export production; releasing advertisements in foreign trade magazines; products development and quality upgradation through appropriate training programmes; ensuring increased availability of export credit etc.

[English]

Fifth Pay Commission

4257. SHRI JAI PRAKASH (Hardoi) : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether a high empowered Committee of Secretaries has been appointed to give their recommendations on the Fifth Pay Commission;

(b) if so, the details of members of the above committee;

(c) whether a meeting with the Joint Consultative Machinery was held on March 3, 1997 to seek their views for the implementation of the above report;

(d) if so, the outcome of the said meeting;

(e) the time fixed by the Government to submit the recommendations by the Committee of Secretaries;

(f) whether any proposal for the retirement age benefit is under consideration and that no employee will be discriminated; and

(g) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR) : (a) and (b) In accordance with the established procedure, an Empowered Committee is constituted to screen the recommendations of the Pay Commission. The Empowered Committee comprises of the following :

1.	Secretary, Deptt. of Expenditure	Chairman
2.	Secretary, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pension	Member
3.	Secretary, Ministry of Defence	"
4.	Secretary, Deptt. of Revenue	"
5.	Secretary, Deptt. of Posts	"
6.	Secretary, Deptt. of Telecom.	"
7.	Secretary, Deptt. of Health	"
8.	Secretary, Deptt. of Sc. & Tech.	"
9.	Member (Staff), Railway Board	"
10.	Dy. Comptroller & Auditor General of India	"
11.	Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs	"

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. The Staff Side of the National Council of the Joint Consultative Machinery have suggested improvements in respect of certain recommendations of the Commission.

(e) The decisions will be taken as soon as feasible.

(f) and (g) The Commission, inter alia, has recommended increase in the age of retirement from 58 years to 60 years, except in respect of those employees who are on extension and the personnel of the Central Police Organisations and the Armed Forces. A decision on this recommendation will be taken alongwith other recommendations.

Assistance to Industries by Financial Institutions

4258. SHRI KESHAB MAHANTA : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) the amount of assistance sanctioned and released by the Financial and investment institutions to the industries in backward and under developed areas of Assam during each of the last three years;

(b) the number of units apply for these loans every year; and

(c) the details of guidelines adopted for considering the applications ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR) : (a) As per information provided by the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI), the details of financial assistance

sanctioned and disbursed by All India Financial Institutions/ Investment Institutions to industrial units in Assam during 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96 are as under :

(Rs. crores)

Year	Sanctions	Disbursements
1993-94	69.9	82.9
1994-95	127.3	78.1
1995-96	643.4	125.7

(b) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

(c) IDBI has reported that the decision to locate a project in a particular State/Region vests with the promoters and they in turn are guided by such factors as availability of infrastructure, raw materials, skilled labour, proximity of the location of the market for their products and incentives from the State Government. Financial Institutions assess the location State Government. Financial Institutions assess the location from the angle of its suitability to the project.

IDBI has further reported that all financially, economically, commercially viable and technically feasible projects are supported by institutions irrespective of their location.

Health Insurance Scheme

4259. SHRI VIJAY PATEL : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to privatise health insurance scheme;

(b) if so, whether any time frame and guidelines in this regard has been issued; and

(c) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) to (c) The Finance Minister in the Budget Speech has made the following announcement :-

> .....GIC has frankly admitted that its Mediclaim policy has not been successful and that it would like to promote joint ventures in this line of business. GIC is also confident of facing competition in the health insurance business. Accordingly, I propose to move necessary amendments to enable GIC to float joint ventures and also to allow entry of selected Indian players in the health insurance sector."

Before these proposals could be implemented, relevant Sections of General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Act, 1972 require appropriate amendments. A time frame for formulation of guidelines in this regard will arise only after carrying out necessary legislative changes.

[Translation]

Printing of Indian Currency in Foreign Countries

4260. SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to print Indian Currency in foreign countries;

(b) if so, whether any assessment of its effect on the future of the employees working in various presses has been assessed;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) As a one time measure, Government has asked RBI to import 3600 million pieces of notes – 2000 million pieces of Rs. 100 and 1600 million pieces of Rs. 500 denominations.

(b) to (d) This will not have any adverse effect on the future of employees working in the various presses as the present import is resorted to as a one time measure because there is a wide gap between the printing capacity of these presses and the demand of RBI for fresh notes.

[English]

Amendments In the Article 124 of the Constitution

4261. SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO : Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have decided to consult all political parties on its proposal to amend Article 124 of the Constitution dealing with the Union judiciary;

(b) if so, whether the amendment to the article has been found necessary in the wake of the recent judgement of the Supreme Court which vested all rights relating to the transfer and appointment of judges in itself;

(c) if so, the whether the Government have obtained the approval of all the parties in introducing this legislation; and

(d) if so, by when the legislation in this regard is likely to be introduced ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LEGAL AFFAIRS, LEGISLATIVE DEPARTMENT AND DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP): (a) to (d) The Government proposes to introduce a Constitution Amendment Bill in the Parliament to make changes in the existing system of appointment of Judges of the Supreme Court, Chief Justices of the High Courts, Judges of the High Courts and transfer of Judges of the High Courts.